

**Darien Surveys refute claim that
“Long-term Lyme disease is a myth”**

Two new surveys in Darien refute the implications of the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA) panel’s February letter in stating: “no convincing published scientific data that support the existence of chronic Lyme disease.” Both surveys among local residents show not only great numbers of Lyme disease cases, but also that debilitating chronic, or long-term cases occur at an alarming rate.

Forty one households completed a questionnaire at the Darien Library’s showing of the Lyme disease film, “Under Our Skin” (out of sixty attendees). They reported a total of 47 Lyme disease cases just among their household members. Those affected households reported that in 64% of those cases, the patient had relapsed after initial Lyme treatment “requiring additional treatment for so-called ‘chronic’ or persistent Lyme disease.”

Since it may be presumed that the Lyme film panel would be weighted toward long-suffering families, a second survey was conducted a week later on May 13th at the meeting of the Darien Senior Men’s Association (SMA). Seventy-one of about 136 men attending completed the same questionnaire. They reported that 34 cases of Lyme disease had infected household members. Of these 22% reported a patient relapsed after initial treatment requiring additional treatment.

Further, 57% of the households reporting cases at the library film indicated that a household member had to be treated for Lyme disease after the disease had progressed, because treatment did not occur promptly after the tick bite. Among senior men reporting, 30% answered “yes” to that question, indicating need for more prompt diagnoses. Currently there is no accurate test for Lyme disease. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends basing diagnosis of disease on symptomatic findings (as blood tests for Lyme may prove inaccurate).

The surveys also indicate that significant numbers had “difficulty finding a knowledgeable physician” for their treatment.

Responding to the survey question on another problem, the one connected to our over-abundant deer population, 41 households in the library survey reported a family member had been involved in a total of 10 deer/vehicle collisions. The 71 senior men reported 12 such deer/vehicle collisions among household members.

Finally, the Deer/Lyme-disease question”: “Before this meeting, were you aware that an adult tick requires a blood meal on a large mammal (almost always a deer) to reproduce and lay thousands of eggs?” Yes, or No? Sixty-one percent of the Library panel answered “yes” they were aware, while 46% of the senior men said “Yes”. This might be considered significant awareness in view of the scant mention in general media of the facts, which are circulated by our state scientific experts.

Most scientists involved with these issues agree that the reduction of deer populations remains by far our best available remedy for the serious problems deer cause among people and plant life. Deer hunting also has broad public support. Indeed, in 2002, when 72 Darien Senior Men, responded to the question of whether they favored controlled deer hunts on certain large properties, only four percent answered “No”.

The new survey with focus on chronic Lyme was created for the film showing with technical support from others by Kent Haydock, He is a career magazine and medical journal marketer, and he has also led Darien’s efforts to manage its prolific deer population ever since the town’s First Selectman Hank Sanders started it in 1997.

The host of the screening of “Under Our Skin” was Rotarian, Russ Cornelius, a member of The Lyme Disease Task Force in Brookfield, CT, and who is showing the film to many area audiences. It dramatically portrays long-term Lyme suffering, and the resulting censure of certain dedicated physicians, who continued long-term treatment of deer-tick diseases. Darien’s Emily Bragg, V.P. of Time for Lyme, assists with technical issues involving Lyme disease. She also distributed her literature and answered questions at the film event. That powerful film should present proof enough that long-term Lyme disease is not a myth.

Several experienced, Darien physicians recently interviewed, agree that the corkscrew bacteria causing Lyme disease (much like the one causing Syphilis), can compromise the immune system and lead to further diseases of the brain, the heart, eyes, or joints. One writes, “The absence of published scientific data (indicating chronic Lyme disease) is not proof that it does not exist. It is merely the absence of proof.”

Should medical authorities decide to use Fairfield County as a further laboratory, dedicated volunteers can point to many heart-rending cases derived from tick diseases. These may include the ones involving a destroyed marriage, a career woman no longer able to work, and even a reported death resulting from cardiac disease.

Our state House has already voted 137 to 0 on the bill to insure doctors they will not face retaliation, if they choose to diagnose and then treat chronic Lyme disease with long-term antibiotics. This bill is now on the way to the state Senate. It may be worth noting that it took some very insistent moms in Lyme, Connecticut in the mid-1970s to force recognition of Lyme disease in this country. Hence the name Lyme disease. For more information, visit www.timeforlyme.org, or www.deeralliance.com. For film information, r.cornelius@snet.net.

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